Cuba Jorge Yglesias

In contrast to the political and formal correctness of the Cuban cinema industry, the emergence of fresh talent working independently or supported by institutions such as the Higher Institute of Arts (ISA) or the International School of Cinema and TV (EICTV) continues to offer strong signs of revitalisation. In terms of film language, ISA productions veer towards the style of music videos, while those at the EICTV are more grounded in art house or experimental cinema.

Mayckell Pedrero's **Revolution**

Mayckell Pedrero´s **Revolution**, a portrait of the quasi-underground rap group, Los Aldeanos (The Villagers), received the top prize at an annual contest for young talent. Banned from exhibition, the film has been widely distributed via illegal DVD copies. Although the work suffers from a faster-than-life approach to editing that some see as quintessential cinema, the anti-establishment attitude and opinions of Los Aldeanos do find a curious correlative in such a style.

The childhood and adolescence of the Cuban national hero, José Martí, was recreated by Fernando Pérez in **José Martí, the Eye of the Canary** (*José Martí, el ojo del canario*). Covering his formative years, the film was a blend of conventional hagiography and inventive *mise-en-scène*. Raúl Pérez Ureta's stunning cinematography, a winner of the National Prize for Cinema, makes the most of the country's stunning light.

Memories of Overdevelopment (*Memorias del desarrollo*), a US$50,000 film made over five years in the US and Cuba by guerrilla filmmmaker Miguel Coyula, is a unique companion to Tomás Gutiérrez Alea´s *Memories of Underdevelopment*, a classic of Cuban cinema. Sergio, an ideological relative of Alea's main character 40 years later, is now an exile in the United States, weighed down by memories and remorse for past actions. A product of the digital generation, the film ranks as one of the best this country has produced.

Miguel Coyula's **Memories of Overdevelopment**

Lisanka, a new comedy by Daniel Díaz Torres, tells the story of a young peasant woman, employed as a tractor driver near a military base during the middle of the Missile Crisis of October, 1962, who is courted by three possessive men. Some interpreted the main character as a representation of Cuba, as she refuses to be objectified by her suitors, one of whom is a Russian soldier.

Bárbaro Joel Ortiz's **20 Years**

Bárbaro Joel Ortiz´s **20 Years** (*20 años*) is a landmark of Cuban animation. Based on a popular song, this short feature uses stop-motion technique to chart the rise and fall of a relationship. Influenced by the great Czech animator Jan Svankmajer, Ortiz worked for three years to achieve a work whose tender memories emerge painfully amidst a couple's daily routine.

Bárbaro Joel Ortiz's **20 Years**

Orisel Castro´s **The Belly of the Whale** and **Music Box** are two good examples of how documentary filmmakers trained at the EICTV have an eye for depicting reality with subtlety. *The Belly of the Whale*, filmed in reverse, sees gestation as a heroic process made of efforts, fears, uncertainties, hopes and expectations; *Music Box* highlights the unintentional humour of registry-office weddings. In both cases, Orisel Castro employs a fragmented narrative, fake amateur cinematography and other devices to present his worlds. Another interesting documentary, albeit less ambitious, was Jessica Rodríguez and Zoe Miranda's **The World of Raúl** (*El mundo de Raúl*), which deals with an eccentric optometrist who talks about his tastes, daily life and how he became a peeping Tom.

If the young filmmakers remain immune to the Buena Vista Social Club syndrome and try to remain faithful to their visions instead of becoming prisoners of banality, Cuban cinema will remain lively, producing films that will be worth seeing.

The year's best films

Memories of Overdevelopment (Miguel Coyula)
José Martí, the Eye of the Canary (Fernando Pérez)
Revolution (Mayckell Pedrero)
The Belly of the Whale (Orisel Castro)
20 Years (Bárbaro Joel Ortiz)

Quote of the year

'I speak about Cuba´s reality, because I live here. I don´t know any other land, other lives than these. If I were living in France, I would speak about France. If I were living in New York, I would speak about New York.' *A member of Los Aldeanos.*

Directory

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